

# **TUPELO PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT**

## **DROPOUT PREVENTION PLAN**



Gear Loden, Ph. D.  
2013-2014

## Part I. Dropout Prevention Plan

Superintendent: Gearl Loden, Ph. D.

Assistant Superintendent, Diana Ezell

Assistant Superintendent, Matt Dillon, Ph. D.

Principal: Jason Harris, Tupelo High School

Principal: Kristy Luse, Ph. D., Tupelo Middle School

Principal: Kenny Goralczyk, Pierce St. Elementary School

Principal: Christy Carroll, Carver Elementary School

Principal: Travis Beard, Milam Elementary School

Principal: Chad Chism, Thomas Street Elementary School

Principal: Kimberly Foster, Joyner Elementary School

Principal: Corlis Curry, Lawhon Elementary School

Principal: Mitzi Moore, Ph.D, Parkway Elementary School

Principal: Brock English, Lawndale Elementary school

Principal: Anna Guntharp, ECEC

SPED Director: Mary Ruth Wright

Executive Director of School Improvement: Leigh Mobley, Ph. D.

## Part II. Local Dropout Prevention Team Members

School District: Tupelo Public School District

Telephone #: 662-841-8850

Mailing Address: Post Office Box 557

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Tupelo, MS 38802

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Gearl Loden, Ph. D.

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Superintendent

Diana Ezell

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Team Leader

Matt Dillon, Ph. D.

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Team Sponsor

Mary Ruth Wright

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Team Sponsor

Zell Long

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Team Parent

David Anthony

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Team Associate

Lewis Whitfield

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Dropout Prevention Team Member

Leigh Mobley, Ph. D.

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Dropout Prevention Team Member

Todd Beadles

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Dropout Prevention Team Member

Eddie Prather

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Dropout Prevention Team Member

Pat Head

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Dropout Prevention Team Member

Sally Hankins

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Dropout Prevention Team Member

Kristy Luse, Ph. D.

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Dropout Prevention Team Member

Jason Harris

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Dropout Prevention Team Member

Larry Harmon

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Dropout Prevention Team Member

Evett Topp

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Dropout Prevention Team Member

### Part III. Statement of Assurance

On behalf of the Tupelo Public School District, I hereby submit a local Dropout Prevention Plan to provide goals, activities and services necessary to meet the three overarching goals of the state dropout prevention plan: 1) Increasing the state graduation rate to 85% by 2018-2019; 2) reduce the state dropout rate by 50% by 2012-2013; and 3) reducing the truancy rate by 50% by 2012-2013.

I hereby certify that the information contained in this plan is in compliance with the appropriate federal and state laws and regulations.

I hereby certify that our school district will cooperate in carrying out any evaluation conducted by or for the Mississippi Department of Education.

I hereby certify that our school district will submit reports as requested by the Mississippi Department of Education.

I hereby certify that our school district has consulted with parents, community partners, business partners, teachers, school staff, building administrators, and others in the development of this local dropout prevention plan.

I hereby certify that our school district has taken into account relevant, scientifically based research, strategies and best practices indicating services most effective in preventing dropouts if we focused on students in the earliest grades.

I hereby certify that our school district will prepare and submit an annual progress report on increasing the graduation rate, reducing the dropout rate and reducing the truancy rate.

I hereby certify that our school district will endorse and implement the Fifteen (15) Effective Strategies to promote a reduction in the dropout rate.

I hereby certify that our school district has based the dropout prevention plan on scientifically based research, best practices and all laws in determining strategies to reduce the dropout rate for students with disabilities under IDEA.

I hereby certify that our school district will evaluate our district dropout prevention plan on an annual basis to determine appropriate changes needed for future school years.

I hereby certify that our District School Board has reviewed and approved this plan for submission to the Mississippi Department of Education.

Dropout Prevention Team Leader

**Name:** Diana Ezell

**Title:** Assistant Superintendent

**Mailing Address:** Post Office Box 557, Tupelo, MS 38802

**Telephone #:** 662-841-8850

**Fax #:** 662-841-8887

**District Superintendent:**

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(signature)

**School Board Chair:**

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(signature)

## Part IV. TPSD District Data

<http://orsap.mde.k12.ms.us/MAARS/index.jsp>

### 2009-2010

#### Achievement and Growth Models

Accountability Status	ACADEMIC WATCH
Quality of Distribution Index(QDI)	159
Growth Status	NOT MET
Graduation Rate	72.2
High School Completion Index(HSCI)	167.9

### 2010-2011

#### Achievement and Growth Models

Accountability Status	ACADEMIC WATCH
Quality of Distribution Index(QDI)	162
Growth Status	NOT MET
Graduation Rate	70.9
High School Completion Index(HSCI)	161.8
Priority School?	Met

### 2012-2013

	Current Year	Prior Year
<b>Accountability Status:</b>	B - High Performing	Academic Watch
Quality of Distribution Index (QDI):	169	162
Growth Status:	Met	Not Met
5- Year Graduation Rate:	72.4	70.9
High School Completion Index (HSCI):	164	162

## COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

### Protective Factors

Tupelo, an All American City of approximately 36,000, has many protective factors in place to support families, schools and students including the following:

Boy Scouts of America – (after-school programs at selected school sites)

Big Brothers Big Sisters of America (mentoring programs)

The Link Center – Houses Girl Scouts of America, the Salvation Army offices, CASA and other charitable organizations.

Salvation Army – Operates after-school tutoring program  
 CASA – An after-school child care and activity program  
 The Family Resource Center – Partners with the Tupelo Public School District to support and promote healthy families through programs and services  
 Three Rivers Area Agency on Aging – Provides respite care, meals, and housekeeping services  
 Lift, Inc. Community Action Agency – Assists the elderly, handicapped or low income families with cost of living expenses and other services.  
 Safe Domestic Violence Shelter – For parents and children  
 Alpha House Home – For Boys who are abused, abandoned 12-18  
 Faith Haven Shelter for Children – For any age child who has become a ward of the state through removal by the Department of Human Services.  
 Helping Hands – A multi-denominational ministry provides food, clothing and household items to low-income families.  
 Good Samaritan Clinic – A free clinic staffed by volunteer physicians, nurses and other staff to serve people who have no medical pay source.  
 Touched by an Angel – A non-profit camp for ill or handicapped children.  
 Hilltop – A multi-denominational youth and adult volunteer group who clean and/or repair homes of handicapped, elderly or poverty-stricken families.  
 Tupelo Junior Auxiliary – Operate a clothes closet and send a representative each year to each school to partner with a counselor for services.  
 School Community collaboration with North Mississippi Medical Center, The Daily Journal, Create Foundation, The Community Development Foundation and Citizens for Public Schools.

### **School/Student Protection Factors**

Early childhood assessment with Early Prevention of School Failure  
 Tupelo Public School District Martin Luther King Early Childhood Center currently serving 4 year olds  
 The Early Childhood Education Center is a recipient of the 2006 Award for Excellence by the Public Education Forum of Mississippi.  
 Early Prevention of School Failure used in Pre-K through grades 1.  
 Kindergarten through third grade teacher/pupil ratio of 15:1  
 Guided reading program  
 Dyslexia Program  
 Intervention specialists in K-8  
 Family Home School Coordinators at four school sites  
 Counselor at every school site  
 Intensified Time/Teachers for tutoring  
 School Resource Officer program  
 Parent Forum  
 106 Nationally Board Certified Teachers

Approximately fifty percent (50) of Tupelo Public School District's teaching staff has advanced degrees including doctoral degrees.

Schools in TPSD have received Blue Ribbon School recognition six times.

Tupelo High School is one of 24 public high schools in the nation to receive a charter to the prestigious Cum Laude Society. (Only public high school in Mississippi)

Tupelo High School has received the MS High School Activities Association All-Sports Award 19 out of 21 years

In 2005 Tupelo High School was selected by Sports Illustrated as one of the top 51 high school athletic programs in the nation.

## **Part V. Needs Assessment Outcomes**

### **Reasons for Dropping Out**

A search of the literature revealed:

- School factors that may contribute:
- Suspension as a punishment
- Parents unaware of absences
- Teachers not understanding diverse student needs
- Unidentified special needs
- School retentions
- Neglect homework/fail tests
- Failure to earn Carnegie units
- Poor relationships with other students
- Sarcasm from teachers, "why are you here?"
- Feeling like they can't catch up
- Home/Community factors that may contribute:
- Financial
- Neglect
- Teen pregnancy/parent
- Parent alcoholism or drug abuse
- Negative role models
- Parent/guardians do not value education
- Juvenile delinquency

Personal Factors that may contribute:

- Poor academic performance resulting in poor self-esteem
- Unmet mental health needs
- Alcohol and drug abuse
- Lack of vision as means to achieve goals
- Caring for siblings

- Work
- Students feeling alone, overwhelmed, invisible

### **Prioritized List of Targeted Students**

- Students who fail state exams
- Students who are one or more years behind their peers
- Students who are truant
- Students with children
- Students considered homeless
- Students with history of emotional and/or behavior issues
- Students with learning disabilities
- Students who are academically gifted and need challenging opportunities

### **Short Term Goals**

- Increase the attendance rate by 1%: The Tupelo Public School District Dropout Attendance Office and Graduation Coach will work with students and families to reduce the number of absences in grades 7-12. Students absent more than five times without an excuse will be referred to the Teacher Support Team. In grades K-6, family school coordinators, counselors, and principals will work to reduce the number of unexcused absences by working with students and families.
- All students will pass the state subject area exams. Using the common tests to identify students who are functioning below grade level, students will be offered placement in subject area preparation classes. Teachers who have received training in curriculum adaptation, classroom management, and special instructional strategies will teach these classes.
- Reduce the number of retentions in grades K-12 by 50%. Improve the GPA in core subjects: Extended school year will give students additional time and focused instruction in the competency with students to identify interests and talents. Once these are identified, the Dropout Attendance Officer and Graduation Coach will match students with appropriate extracurricular activities. The Dropout Attendance Officer and Graduation Coach will continue contact with the student and his/her family, emphasizing that attendance matters.
- Academy if they are behind two or more years and are in grades 7-12.
- THS students will have the opportunity for dual enrollment with a partnership with ICC.

## **Long Term Goals**

- Increase Graduation Rate to 85%
- Decrease Dropout Rate to < 5%
- Reduce truancy rate to 16%
- Ensure school connectedness.
- The data collected and a review of the research indicate that students need to be engaged at school to prevent truancy and dropping out. Students at risk show a lack of commitment to school, low self-esteem and experience greater feelings of rejection or criticism. Tupelo Public School District will:
  - Disseminate supports and incentives/rewards for good attendance and develop consequences for poor attendance.
  - Reduce teacher absenteeism rate
  - Increase TST monitoring of performance interventions.
  - Ensure Professional Development focuses on:
    - Instructional strategies
    - Classroom management
    - PBS
    - Special Populations
  - Ensure a safe and healthy educational environment.
  - Promote community knowledge of, involvement in, and support for the TPSD pursuit of excellence.
  - Implement and sustain comprehensive programs that
  - address the needs of all students.
  - Support quality teaching that inspires students to achieve at their highest potential.
  - Recommendations for future needs assessments

## **Recommendations for Assessment Tools and data sources:**

- Student survey SMART TRAC (annually)
- Parent / Community survey (annually)
  - What is Tupelo School District known for?
  - What does TPSD do best?
  - What could TPSD do better?
  - What would you like to see TPSD do that it is not currently doing?
- Positive Behavior Support Survey (annually)
- Discipline Data from SAM7 (quarterly)
- Attendance data from SAM7 (monthly)
- Retention rates determined from SAM7 data (annually)
- Student assessment data found in the electronic data base provided by TPSD (quarterly)
- MAARS 2.0
- TST Records

- Career Appraisal data (annually)
- TPSD Career Teacher Appraisal Instrument
- TPSD Career Administrator Appraisal Instrument
- Professional development survey and evaluations (annually)
- Community Think Tank (every two years)
- ELLS EZ Assessment and Test Tracker
- Accountability Analyzer
- Grades

# **Dropout Prevention Initiatives**

## **Professional Learning Systems**

### **Grade Level Addressed**

District-wide

### **Purpose or Goal**

- Provide teachers with research based ongoing professional development tied to the needs of the students.
- Develop professional communities to allow teachers regular opportunities to meet in subject area, grade level, and interdisciplinary teams.
- Provide principals and district administrators professional training and support in instructional coaching, dropout prevention strategies, and identifying and meeting the needs of special populations.
- Provide opportunities for teachers to work with academic coaches as the coaches:
  - Model new strategies
  - Observe teachers regularly
  - Provide teachers feedback and support in the delivery of instruction
  - Increase professional dialogues among staff
  - Build professional learning communities
  - Train instructional and support staff in the following areas:
    - Inferential Teaching Strategies
    - Orton-Gillingham
    - Curriculum Adaptation
    - Depth of Knowledge
    - Framework for Understanding Poverty
    - Working with Discipline
    - Study Skills
    - Adult Reading and Basic Education
    - Academic and Behavior Interventions
    - Utilizing Data to Inform Instructional Decisions
    - Transforming School Counseling
    - Reading to Learn
    - Positive Behavior Supports
    - Teaching Content to ELL Students

### **Who is Involved**

Professional Development Trainers  
Principals  
Counselors  
Academic Coaches  
All instructional staff

### **Proposed Cost**

District Level Professional Development Training - \$165,000

Instructional/academic coaches - \$525,000  
National School Leadership Institute  
Instructional Coaching \$22,000  
ELL \$15,000  
SPED \$15,000  
National Conferences - \$25,000

### **Dropout Prevention Strategy Addressed**

Professional Development

### **Expected Outcomes for Students**

100% of TPSD grades 3-8 will score Proficient and Advanced MCT2

### **Critical Academic Supports**

### **Grade Level Addressed**

District-wide

### **Purpose or Goal**

- Develop subject area preparation classes
- Instruction of MS Frameworks and CCSS
- Instructional strategies based on student learning styles
- Provide Extended School Year for students who need longer than 180 days to master curriculum benchmarks
- Provide in school and after school tutoring for students to maintain passing grades.
- Schedule blocks of two class periods to give students more time and deliberate instruction for Reading/English at TMS.
- Provide career training to students placed at the alternative school
- Develop appropriate academic supports for:
  - ELL students
  - SPED students
  - Dyslexia students
  - Low achieving students
- Develop district level Teacher Support Team to monitor building level teams to ensure that process and timelines are being followed
- Collect data such as common assessment scores and nine weeks grades to determine student progress
- Provide GED preparation classes
- Provide career counseling at THS
- Provide sheltered classes at each building so that ELL and Dyslexia students can have specially trained teachers teaching content.

### **Who is Involved?**

Superintendent  
TMS and THS Principals  
Alternative School Director  
Director of Curriculum and Instruction

Assistant Superintendents  
Director of SPED  
ELL Coordinator  
Intervention Coordinator

### **Proposed Cost**

Curriculum Work - \$565,000  
Print/Media - \$70,000  
Tutors - \$45,000  
Interventionists - \$210,000  
Career Counselor - \$55,000  
ELL Coordinator - \$50,000

### **Dropout Prevention Strategy Addressed**

After School Opportunities  
Career/Technical Education  
Alternative Schooling

### **Expected Outcomes for Students**

100% of students will be at or above grade level as measured by district curriculum assessments and the MCT2.

### **Mentoring Model**

#### **Grade Level Addressed**

District-wide

#### **Purpose or Goal**

Using the Mentoring Model, the TPSD will employ a Dropout Counselor/Graduation Coach and a Dropout Attendance Officer to serve as monitors for grades 9-12. Additionally, the twenty-three counselors in grades K-12 and four family school coordinators will serve as mentors. Mentors must be:

- Persistent
- Believe that all children have abilities
- Be willing to work closely with families using a "non-blaming approach"
- Advocate for the student
- Committed to documenting the intervention
- Able to work well in different settings

Each mentor must establish trust with the students and their families, sometimes becoming their lifeline and navigator through the school system. The mentor regularly checks on student attendance and academic performance, talks to the families and listens to students, checking and connecting throughout the year. The mentor checks student engagement periodically using several indicators that include

attendance, social/behavior performance, and academic performance. Using these indicators, the monitor can then "connect" using either basic or intensive interventions. All students receive basic interventions, which are primarily comprised of purposeful conversations with the monitors once a month for secondary students and once a week for elementary students. The monitor talks to the student about their progress in school and its connection to graduation, possible conflicts or concerns and their resolution, and strengthens student coping skills.

An intensive intervention is triggered by a student exhibiting early warning signs of dropping out of school (e.g., attendance, academic performance, behavior). The monitor taps existing support services when needed and appropriate and increases the degree of interaction with the student, including calling the student and parent in the morning to make sure the student gets out of bed and gets to school.

### **Who is Involved?**

Mentors for grades 6-12  
Family School Coordinators  
Counselors  
Principals  
Teachers  
Parents  
Graduation Coach  
Dropout Prevention Attendance Officer

### **Proposed Cost**

Salaries - \$90,000  
Travel - \$2,500  
Cell phones - \$1,980  
Supplies - \$10,000

### **Dropout Prevention Strategy Addressed**

Mentoring/Tutoring

### **Expected Outcomes for Students**

All students grades 9-12 will pass the subject area tests.

Students will attend school regularly and participate in extra-curricular and curricular activities.

### **Early Literacy Training**

### **Grade Level Addressed**

Pre-Kindergarten and Elementary

### **Purpose or Goal**

- Provide early literacy instruction in language, phonic awareness, and phonics skills.
- Provide regular guided oral reading with a focus on fluency.
- Provide direct teaching of comprehension strategies
- Provide early interventions to struggling readers using multi-sensory methods, Early Prevention of School failure, and instructional technology.

### **Who is Involved?**

Superintendent  
 Assistant Superintendent  
 Principals  
 Reading Specialists  
 Director of Federal Programs  
 Director of Special Education  
 Teachers Salaries of instructional staff proposed in other initiatives

### **Proposed Cost**

Supplies - \$15,000  
 Instructional Books/software - \$425,000

### **Dropout Prevention Strategy Addressed**

Early Literacy  
 Early Childhood Education

### **Expected Outcomes for Students**

All kindergarten students will score at least moderately above grade level as measured by common assessments. All elementary students will score proficient or above in Reading and Language as measured by the MCT2.

## **Positive Behavior Supports**

### **Grade Level Addressed**

District-wide

### **Purpose or Goal**

- Develop an infrastructure of positive behavior supports
- Increase consistency among community, staff, and students regarding behavior expectations, rules, consequences, and rewards
- Increase attendance through incentives and behavior supports
- Foster respectful relationships among youth and adults
- Develop school cultures that are caring and have common rules and expectations that are positively reinforced
- Build communication lines with families and the community
- Implement strategies that promote academic success, decrease inappropriate behavior, and increase student engagement
- Develop and implement a Tier I behavior curriculum pre-K – 12
- Implement proven researched based Tier II and Tier III behavior interventions

### **Who Is Involved?**

District PBS Team  
School Based Teams  
All Employees  
Parents  
Students PreK-12

### **Proposed Cost**

PBS training - \$40,000  
Curriculum Development - \$50,000  
Media/Print - \$60,000  
PBS Conferences - \$6,250  
Student/family Materials - \$72,000  
School Psychologist - \$65,000 (MDE and local funds)

### **Dropout Prevention Strategy Addressed**

Safe Learning Environment

### **Expected Outcomes for Students**

The number of students referred for disciplinary action will be reduced by half as reported by SAM7.

Students will be rewarded and/or acknowledged for appropriate behavior.

Students will receive needed and timely interventions to support positive behavior in school.

## **Personalized Educational Planning**

### **Grade Level Addressed**

District-wide

### **Purpose or Goal**

- Develop comprehensive TPSD curriculum assessments for all grade levels and subject areas.
- Develop benchmark assessments designed to determine level of mastery and monitor progress
- Design benchmark mastery checklists for all grade level and subject areas (extended year checklists)
- Administer assessments for 8th and 9th graders who are one or more years behind and all students assigned to alternative school
- Design personalized curriculum for at-risk students utilizing data from aptitude testing, benchmark assessments, curriculum assessments, and Career Inventories
- Use assessment data to design personal educational plans for every at risk student:
  - ELL
  - Dyslexia
  - Low achieving (one or more years behind)

### **Who is Involved?**

Assistant Superintendent  
Director of Student Assessment  
Curriculum Team  
Assessment Team  
Principals  
Teachers  
Counselors  
Parents

### **Proposed Cost**

Curriculum/Assessment Teams - \$600,000  
Printing/ Reproduction - \$30,000  
Assessments - \$30,000  
Scoring of Assessments - \$10,000  
COMMON ASSESSMENTS/ELS - \$38,000

### **Dropout Prevention Strategy Addressed**

Individualized Instruction

### **Expected Outcomes for Students**

95% of students will be promoted annually.  
Increase graduation rate by 50% of current rate.